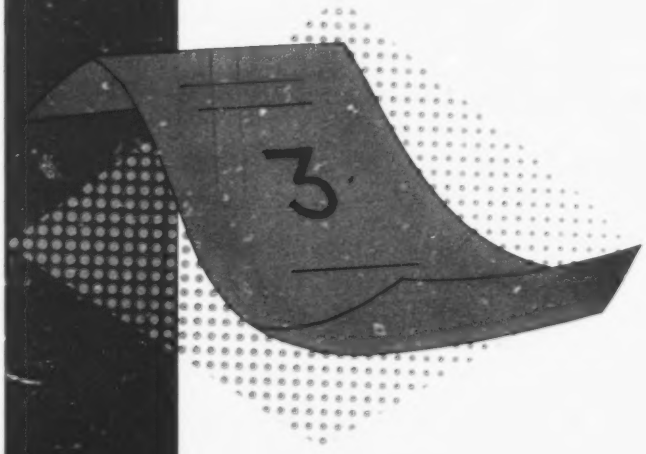
THE UNITED NATIONS SOCIAL AGENDA



UNITED NATIONS

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1990: INTERNATIONAL LITERACY YEAR

Calendar of Special Days

8 March	International Women's Day
21 March	International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
7 April	World Health Day
4 June	International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression
5 June	World Environment Day
26 June	International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking
8 September	International Literacy Day
18 September	International Day of Peace
1 October	International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction
6 October	Universal Children's Day
16 October	World Food Day
24 October	United Nations Day
1 December	World AIDS Day
5 December	International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development
10 December	Human Rights Day

nd International Conferences

8-26 January	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Geneva)
22 January-2 February	Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (New York)
29 January-2 February	Commission on Narcotic Drugs (Vienna)
29 January-9 March	Commission on Human Rights (Geneva)
5-16 February	Committee on Crime Prevention and Control (Vienna)
20-23 February	Special Session of the General Assembly to Further International Co-operation Against Illicit Drugs (New York)
26 February-9 March	Commission on the Status of Women (First 5-Year Review of Implementation of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies) (Vienna)
5-9 March	World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs (Bangkok)
27 August-7 September	Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (Havana)
29-30 September	World Summit for Children (New York)
12-21 November	World Climate Conference (Geneva)

WOMEN: THE SILENCED MAJORITY

8 March International Women's Day

Women constitute half of the global population; in many countries they perform more than three-quarters of the work in addition to their tasks in the home and as mothers. Yet, they are the object of widespread discrimination.

Numerically, women contribute substantially to the world's work force. Yet much of their labour is in low-paying "job ghettos" or in the so-called "informal sector", is "invisible" and brings little in the way of job security or benefits. In fact, women receive only one tenth of the world's income and one one hundredth of its property. This situation has led to an ominous global trend called the "feminization of poverty".

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, adopted in 1979, has now been ratified by 100 nations.

Despite the provision of gender equality in many statute books, isolation and illiteracy make it virtually impossible for many women to actually exercise their legal rights.

Politically, too, women are a silenced majority, constituting only 9.7 per cent of the members of parliaments worldwide.

Indeed, it has been aptly observed that, for women, there are no truly developed countries. Discrimination persists. However, it is the task of the UN to raise public awareness of such inequities. This it has done through such devices as the observation of International Women's Day each year on March 8th, the declaration of International Women's Year in 1975, and the designation of an entire United Nations Decade for Women 1976-1985.

HEALTH FOR ALL: YOUTH AND THE ELDERLY FACE THE ISSUE TOGETHER

7 April World Health Day

One billion people or 20 per cent of the world's population are diseased, in poor health or malnourished, according to the WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO).

Yet, there can be no liberty, no economic development and no human progress unless we meet at least the minimum conditions for health. The common goal is Health for All by the Year 2000.

For the next few decades, as a result of demographic transitions, there will be more young people living side by side with an increasing number of elderly people.

Both groups are extremely vulnerable to rapidly changing social conditions. The young are threatened with such hazards as tobacco, alcohol and drug abuse, unwanted or early pregnancies, AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. The old often face neglect and destitution.

This year WHO is launching an Adolescent Health Programme. Looking for innovative approaches to adolescent health care, WHO strives to foster partnerships with youth organizations that will help to shape future policies and programmes.

WHO also has a Global Programme of Health for the Elderly for the period 1990-1995. The objective of this programme is to reduce functional dependency of the elderly caused by deteriorating health and thereby unlock their creative potentials.

Thus, the enthusiasm of youth and the wisdom of the elderly together can make a difference in putting high on the social agenda the slogan of World Health Day:

OUR PLANET—OUR HEALTH
THINK GLOBALLY—ACT LOCALLY.

TO CREATE A HAZARD-RESILIENT WORLD

5 June World Environment Day
1 October International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction

Decline and deterioration of the planet's ecological capital will accelerate unless global consensus on growth and development includes a readiness to face a daunting environmental agenda. As we approach the 21st century, protection and improvement of our environment has become a major goal of social progress and development.

Neglect of the environment has increased the likelihood of disasters occuring more frequently.

Natural disasters have claimed about 3 million lives world-wide in the past two decades and affected the lives of at least 800 million more.

In proclaiming the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (1990-1999), the United Nations will play a leading role in co-ordinating activities, and will function as a clearing-house for information to advance broader appreciation of the positive relationship between disaster reduction and economic and social development.

The strategy of the Decade is to help shift attention from post-disaster relief to pre-disaster planning and preparedness.

Of critical importance will be the active involvement of scientific, technical, academic and other non-governmental organizations.

Failure to learn from past disasters contributes to continued heavy tolls from natural hazards. The loss of life and property would be much reduced if people were periodically reminded of and well-prepared for disasters.

International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction will help to achieve this goal.

DRUGS: BATTLING A MANY-HEADED MONSTER

26 June International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking
20-23 February Special Session of the General Assembly to Further International Co-operation Against Illicit Drugs

The world's youngest drug addict is not yet born. Pregnant women who are dependent on drugs transmit their dependency to their babies. Illegal drug trafficking undermines political and economic systems as it tears the social fabric. Alone, no one Government can eliminate this many-headed monster. However, through the United Nations, all countries have a comprehensive system to treat and prevent drug abuse and to stop its illegal trade.

106 countries adopted the Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances in 1988. Although it is by no means the first international treaty in the field of drug control codified by the United Nations, it is the first one to contain broad practical measures to counter the economic power of drug traffickers. For example, secret bank accounts, long an inviolable sanctuary for drug lords to evade prosecution, can no longer be invoked. Through the Convention courts are empowered to trace, freeze and seize the ill-gotten assets of drug traders.

To foster international co-operation against drug trafficking, the General Assembly of the United Nations decided to convene a special session. A political declaration and a global programme of action stemming from the high-level session will bring into focus the unprecedented danger which drug abuse poses to the global community.

In the area of early prevention and education, the UN Division of Narcotic Drugs in Vienna acts as the information clearing-house for materials, publications and programmes which can be accessed by NGOS.

Drug abuse is a concern for all NGOs, whether their issue is AIDS, the aged, youth, education or development. Thus, incorporating the drug issue into NGO activities should be implemented not only on 26 June, but every day.

The United Nations Social Agenda provides NGOs and other interested individuals with briefs on social issues being dealt with by the United Nations system. More information on all of these subjects is available from:

Economic and Social Development and Human Rights Section/CPMD
Department of Public Information
United Nations
New York, New York 10017, USA

Or write directly to these addresses for further information:

International Literacy Year Secretariat
UNESCO, 7, place de Fontenoy
75700 Paris, France

Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO)
Palais des Nations, CH-1211
Geneva 10, Switzerland

World Health Organization
1211 Geneva 27
Switzerland

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